

# THE MUSIC LIBRARIES TRUST



## **2024 Bursaries** *Awards and recipient reports*

June 2024

## **Music Libraries Trust Bursaries awarded in 2024 for the IAML (UK & Irl) Annual Study Weekend**

In 2024 the IAML (UK & Irl) Annual Study Weekend (ASW) was held in Leeds on the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> April. MLT was able to provide funding for four attendees at the conference, using funds remaining from a withdrawn application to last year's annual congress, and a full bursary very kindly sponsored by Stainer & Bell.

One full bursary was awarded, and three part bursaries, to the following:

Full bursary:

- Emily Peart (Clyde & Co; University College London) – *Stainer & Bell bursary recipient*

Part bursaries:

- Hannah McCooke (Craigmillar Library)
- Alex Nightingale (Royal Northern College of Music)
- Frank Norman (CYM Library)

Each applicant has been asked to provide a report on attending the conference, and these are included in this document. Each applicant has expressed their gratitude to the Trust for enabling their attendance.

## **Music Libraries Trust Bursaries awarded in 2024 for the IAML International Congress**

A bursary was advertised for the 2024 IAML International Congress in South Africa, but no applications were received.

## **Emily Peart – *Stainer & Bell* bursary recipient**

The 2024 IAML Annual Study Weekend was a love letter to Leeds and libraries, and I must open this report by saying a big thank you to the Music Libraries Trust and Stainer & Bell, without the bursary I wouldn't have been able to attend. I arrived not really sure of what to expect and feeling a little bit like a fraud, after all, I don't currently work in a music library, but a law library. However, any worry I had turned out to be completely unfounded, and I was warmly welcomed by all.

It was clear from the outset that all the delegates and the speakers were passionate about their communities and their users and driven to make sure that everyone was represented equally, equitably and when required, with compassion. The presentations were not only engaging and informative but often thought provoking, inspirational, and provided great insight into what is being done to facilitate and embolden musicians up and down the country in many different settings.

The Radisson were wonderful hosts, providing us with delicious food and very nice rooms. It was lovely to get to spend the Saturday morning in Leeds Art Gallery before heading off for the library tours. I attended both the Treasures of the Brotherton Gallery at the University of Leeds and the tour of Leeds Central Library; both were absolutely fascinating. A particular favourite of mine from the Brotherton Gallery showcase was a letter from Mendelssohn to one of his sponsors informing him of many things but starting with the birth of his third child and thanking God that his wife, while still in bed, was safe and healthy. Mendelssohn's love for them oozed palpably from the page and was very touching. This was then followed by an inciteful tour of the Leeds Central Library, the building itself was delightfully crammed with visible history, the working iterations of the building laid out for all to see. I will forever wonder how someone managed to steal one of the stone dogs! And in the wake of catastrophic announcements like the cuts to the Birmingham Library Service it was heartening to see a library being invested in and seemingly thriving in the heart of its community.

As I have already alluded to, the sessions were fantastic, but the following were particular highlights for me. The "Speed date our Archive and Special Collections" from the Friday evening presented us with a number of interesting books and pieces of ephemera and was also just such a wonderful idea that should hopefully be easily adaptable to other settings for purposes such as training. As music service funding and funding for the arts in general is being slashed without thought or care of the repercussions this will have on wider society, it was beyond heartening to hear about the partnership between Edinburgh Libraries and Tinderbox Orchestra to provide a musical instrument lending service. Hannah's presentation started with a short video showing the children getting to try various instruments, sheer joy exuding from them at the experience, and showcasing just how important these kinds of initiatives are in a political climate that does not value music and the arts.

“EDI Initiatives to Developing Diversity within the Collections of the RCM Library – A Case Study” was the talk I was most looking forward to. It immediately jumped out at me when I was initially perusing the Annual Study Week events program and was what led me to submit my bursary application. Peter didn’t disappoint! It was wonderful to hear that the diversification at the Royal College of Music has been mandated at an executive level with changes being made in the syllabus to facilitate students expanding their repertoire. The library has, of course, risen to meet this need, and Peter offered practical advice about how to not only diversify a music collection but also how to engage with students along the way by making sure to highlight underrepresented composers on the library pages and allowing them to make acquisition suggestions. The talk was a how-to guide and a success story rolled into one.

Before any of us really knew it, Sunday, and the final presentation was upon us. Charity rounded off the excellent weekend with panache, making us not only laugh, but also exercise our vocal chords with a little bit of singing! The review of her career journey, reflecting on the good and the bad, was poignant, reassuring and heartening, reminding us that even in uncertain times we can still thrive, sometimes we may just have to let ourselves flow with the current rather than trying to fight against it.

I left the conference feeling inspired and invigorated (which may already have been deduced from the number of superlatives I’ve used in this report), and I certainly wasn’t the only one. My initial reason for attending the conference was to dip my toe into the music libraries pool too see if I liked the water before taking the plunge, and I can now say with some certainty I am more desperate than ever to make the move into music libraries. Thank you to the Events and Training Committee for organising such a fabulous weekend, this was my first Annual Study Weekend, but it certainly won’t be my last.

## Hannah McCooke

I very kindly received a bursary of £300 to attend the ASW in Leeds. This allowed me to attend the full conference, and to present as a speaker. As an early career public librarian this offered me an opportunity I would not have had otherwise. As you will be well aware, training budgets for staff in public libraries can be hard to come by- I funded the remainder of the costs to attend myself and would not have been able to attend without the bursary awarded to me. I enjoyed all the presentations and meeting library staff from all over the UK and from academic and specialist libraries. I particularly enjoyed the visits to Leeds Central Library and the Brotherton Gallery, and it was great to get to ask Lee (who was a wonderful host) all the practical questions too. The staff from these libraries were so generous with their thoughts and their time and I loved seeing how music was part of almost every collection. I really enjoyed speed dating the archives, and seeing such a wide amount of material presented by such knowledgeable staff. It was great seeing the software, posters, the zines, and the historical material all touched by music- even the Antarctic explorers needed music! It was great learning about the lending sets and what online software was available to support our delivery of instrument lending in public libraries. The discussions around gender equality in music collections and competition was also very interesting and important, and the cataloguing help was much appreciated as we build a sheet music collection at our branch for the first time. I feel like I gained a lot of useful contacts in the wider community of Music Libraries and learned about resources I had no idea existed. I have no doubt the contacts I made at the ASW will help me significantly to grow our existing project, and that I can be a valuable resource for those considering setting up instrument borrowing themselves. The final talk on finding your feet as a music librarian was also very valuable and reassuring, and I related to a lot of what was discussed. I think it has helped me to avoid falling into some of the same pitfalls!

I was delighted to be able to present my talk 'Edinburgh Musical Instrument Libraries Collaboration/ Music to the Masses' on the Saturday. This was my first time presenting at a conference and I loved speaking about this work which I consider to be extremely valuable in our library, where we serve a community experiencing multiple deprivations. I discussed how the borrowing works, where we received funding from and how we have received all of our instruments via donations. I discussed the incredible value of our partner Tinderbox Collective in being able to achieve what we have. Tinderbox has covered all sorts of little things, like ordering reeds for us, and all sorts of really big things- like making a joint funding bid to provide a musician in residence in the library who provides free one-to-one tutoring. Tinderbox has given us an incredible wealth of knowledge to draw on, and fixes up all our instruments so they are good quality and fully functional for our borrowers. I was able to share stats on how many instruments we have lent (910 in the last year) and the attendance of our workshops, gigs and events. I shared case studies of our Jam Group, as well as discussing the sometimes surprising impact this project has had on other work. Instrument lending has supported the delivery of our baby rhyme time programmes, our Arts Award for teenagers, as well as giving us a doorway into

the nearby travelling community. I spoke about how our very poorly attended poetry workshops were transformed into very popular songwriting workshops, simply with the addition of some ukuleles! I also shared feedback from our borrowers and our partners. I finished the talk by discussing one of our funding streams, which is the Edinburgh Fringe performances we put it to support the project. We performed nine sell-out dates in the reference library and received a slew of 4 and 5 star reviews. The show was so successful that we will be touring it this summer, and I was delighted to discuss with many music libraries how we could work together to visit their branch and put on the show there.

All in all the ASW was very valuable and I would encourage more public libraries to attend, and to apply for the bursary if they need to. I would like to thank the Music Libraries Trust for allowing me to attend and to have my first experience presenting at a conference in such a lovely comfortable environment with such lovely people. I felt I gained so much from the other attendees and their thoughtful talks, as well as the visits. I also feel my attendance and my presentation were valuable additions to the weekend and I felt able to contribute as well. I had been quite nervous that my lack of technical music knowledge would hold me back, being around such experts in their field- but my anxieties were quickly alleviated by being around people who were so genuinely passionate about their work. We found common ground in this and I think having a variety of people from different types of libraries and at different stages in their career was a really good thing. I hope I am able to attend again in future and have no doubt that the continuing usefulness of the conference will become more and more apparent as I draw on the contacts I made and the knowledge I gained. Thanks again for the experience, it was a pleasure to attend.

## **Frank Norman**

### **Music is everywhere**

This was the first time I attended a music library conference. I learnt about IAML and its work, about the community of music libraries/librarians in the UK, and particularly enjoyed discussions about the lending of choral/orchestral sets in the UK. I also gained insights into a number of other interesting and/or inspiring tales from the broader music library world.

#### **IAML**

The conference was a nice size - about 35 attendees - so it was easy to interact with most of the people there, and find out about their work. Several sessions provided updates about IAML, how it works, and what it does. There is a need to broaden membership to include people outside of libraries - someone said 'Music is everywhere' not just in libraries, so we should think expansively about potential members. It was good to see that IAML UK&Irl is planning for the future, in a world where music libraries continue to be under pressure and membership is shrinking.

Branch president Janet di Franco asked for our ideas for future activities and a number of subcommittees put out calls for volunteers. We were also enjoined to use IAML events and publications as ways to share our experience. This can be especially valuable for music librarians working on their own, or in relative professional isolation. There's also a need to spread the word about music libraries, and the main IAML body is to lobby UNESCO to establish an international day for music libraries.

#### **Practical matters**

*National set lending.* Lee Noon outlined the complexity of current provision and the pressures that choral and orchestral set collections face. One major issue is the future of the Encore21 catalogue. This key infrastructure needs improvements to be made sustainable. The underlying technology (Koha) is good and flexible, but could be improved by adding a lending system to the catalogue. This would allow users to move easily from locating a set to effecting a loan. While desirable, this would be a big undertaking and would take some work to get agreement from all current Encore21 participants.

It was noted that a survey of current providers will be launched soon, and this will be useful alongside the results of the Encore21 user survey. I see that the Music Libraries Trust also ran a survey in 2020 and produced a report in 2022 that might guide thinking.

*Procurement.* This came up as a side issue in Peter Linnett's talk. He mentioned the challenges of sourcing music from some USA publishers, and gave some tips which spurred interest from the audience. I wondered whether there is an opportunity for an entrepreneurial individual to step

in and provide a solution, or whether procurement bodies such as LUPC or SUPC might take an interest in forging a way forward.

*Cataloguing ethics.* This session was instructive and generated a lively discussion. I appreciated hearing from Deborah Lee, a lecturer at UCL's Department of Library & Information Studies with research expertise in music knowledge organisation, and from Diane Rasmussen McAdie, Professor of Social Informatics at Edinburgh Napier University. Diane was a member of the Cataloguing Ethics Steering Committee which drew up the Cataloguing Code of Ethics in 2021. Deborah and Diane introduced the topic and then Caroline Shaw (British Library) gave two very practical examples. In one project context notes were added to 200 catalogue records to flag up offensive language in song titles. In another case, pushing for inclusive language led to a change in an institution's style guide.

### **Interesting.**

*Instrument lending.* It's always good to hear about successful innovations and Hannah McCooke's account of musical instrument lending in six Edinburgh public library branches was very inspiring. The scheme is a collaboration with the Tinderbox Collective and started in August 2022. Since then they've accumulated more than 300 instruments and in 2023 recorded over 900 loans. They have a musician-in-residence who offers tuition one day a week and puts on workshops. The scheme has reached hundreds of children, and adults too. They have a heap of testimonials and events under their belt.

*Cultural history.* In 2020 Leeds Museums & Galleries created an exhibition called 'Sounds of our City' to celebrate music in Leeds. This became an online exhibition, focusing on places in Leeds where music of all sorts was made. The exhibition inspired a book called 'Popular Music in Leeds', and three of the co-editors described the book and the process of creating it. They are also developing an app to map Leeds popular music venues and history, as well as images.

This theme of cultural history was continued in the after-dinner session of archive and special collection 'speed dating'. We moved around ten tables, each with a librarian and an item from their collection. They had three minutes to explain what the item was and what it signified. At the end we each voted for our favourite item, and then the winner was declared. This was a great session and left me wanting to know more about all the items.

History was also the focus of Geoff Thomason's talk about the friendship between Adolph Brodsky and Ferruccio Busoni. They got to know each other in Leipzig but kept up links when Brodsky moved to Manchester as a professor at the Royal Manchester College of Music (now the RNCM). Brodsky suggested that Busoni might join him there, as professor of piano, but he declined. This detailed talk showed evidence of many hours spent researching in the RNCM archives to unearth the history between the two musicians.



Another talk told us about work to catalogue the archives of some women musicians - Harriet Cohen, Astra Desmond and Phyllis Tate. This is valuable work to increase representation and make resources available to music historians.

Leeds is home to the triennial Leeds International Piano Competition (LIPC) and the 2024 event is already under way. In a wide-ranging talk we learnt about its history and the achievement of Fanny Waterman in creating LIPC, and how efforts are now being made to address the gender gap.

### **Music librarianship**

Three of the talks at the ASW gave insights into the work of music librarians. Peter Linnett described a raft of EDI initiatives at the Royal College of Music library. Sarah Lewis told us about her experience of moving into music librarianship, as Subject Librarian for the Creative Arts at University of Lincoln. She is developing a libguide for the music dissertation module - it looks very good and thorough, focusing on the learner needs rather than the resources. Charity Dove gave a very personal account of her 17 years working as subject librarian for music at Cardiff University. She didn't shy away from describing some very challenging times. Her intense connection with and dedication to her user community shone through strongly.

I think these three talks really showed the best of music librarianship.

## Alex Nightingale

### Some reflections from a new music librarian

From the 5th to the 7th of June, I had the pleasure of attending the Annual Study Weekend of the International Association of Music Librarians, held at the Radisson Blu hotel in Leeds. I was able to attend the ASW thanks to the support of the MLT, who I would like to thank for providing me with this opportunity; without their financial support, I would not have been able to attend. The ASW comprised a series of informative talks from members of IAML, which touched upon a wide range of subjects, from the launch of a new book on Popular Music in Leeds to an in-depth discussion of cataloguing best practice. Unfortunately, due to a timetabling clash I was only able to attend the 6th and 7th, but I found the atmosphere welcoming and the talks engaging. However, a colleague of mine and I did notice that the weekend felt more geared towards regular attendees, rather than first-timers like ourselves.

The weekend involved several extremely interesting talks from experts in their fields. A speaker from the Royal College of Music detailed some methods for streamlining acquisitions in order to stretch library budgets further (although some of the suggested methods did involve having a friend or colleague who lived in the USA). One talk which I found particularly inspiring was from the We Make Music Instrument Libraries project, who discussed the practicalities of operating a public instrument lending library. The unique challenges posed by large, valuable non-book items was illuminating, but more so was the speaker's enthusiasm and passion for the project, which reminded everyone in the room why we do what we do: to make music accessible to the widest possible audience.

One frustration I found was in the parallel talks run on the 6th: one talk discussing cataloguing, whilst the other considered circulation. As a new music librarian, I was keen to learn about both topics, but had to choose which one to attend, as they were running at the same time. Whilst synchronous talks are an efficient way to handle large events, I did not feel it was necessary for a conference of this size, and it instead proved a barrier to entry. Coordinating with a colleague, we agreed to attend one talk each and then compare notes. On discussion, we found two overarching themes which we both noticed: both talks expected a very high level of prior knowledge, and both raised more questions than answers. The high level of expected knowledge made the talks challenging to follow for new starters, and I believe that a future set of talks on cataloguing and classification aimed towards inexperienced music librarians would be extremely beneficial. For the latter point, it is important to hold these discussions, as they force us to consider the ways in which we can address challenging topics, but the discussions did not formulate any actionable plans. Some ideas raised for the challenges of circulation included introducing consistency in set-lending prices across the country – but it was agreed that the complexity of this task would need a significant number of councils and organisations – and the need for a new set-lending system which could handle booking, returning and lending, rather than the range of

services currently used, such as MPAL, Zinfonia and Encore21. Creating a new nation-wide service would be an expensive but invaluable project, and there was no consensus on where this funding should be acquired, although the MLT was suggested as a possible source. The cataloguing discussion was primarily an investigation into the software used by different libraries. Unfortunately, many of the suggestions for improvement were not applicable within my workspace, as we were the only library present using our specific LMS, and the majority of our cataloguing is done manually, rather than using imported records.

Some of the most interesting parts of the weekend were in the 'extracurricular' segments, which included a visit to the Brotherton library music archival collection, and the Leeds Conservatoire library. The Brotherton was fascinating, as we were able to examine archival documents such as early manuscript sheet music, and it highlighted some of the challenges of holding sheet music in a non-specialist library: each institution has its own opinions on how sheet music should be classified within their institution, as they cannot be considered the same as textual books. The visit to the Leeds Conservatoire was one of the most valuable parts of the trip for me personally, as it provided the opportunity to see how another library organised and managed its collections. Compared to my home institution, there was a stronger focus on literature, multimedia and other non-sheet-music items. We were told by the organisers of the ASW that we were welcome to visit the Conservatoire library on a self-guided basis, but it is a shame that this was not an organised part of the weekend. In future, collaborations with local music libraries could be extremely valuable, possibly a member of senior staff available to ask about the fine details of library operations, and would promote a spirit of cooperation between music libraries. It would also help to promote awareness of IAML, as members of the host institution would be able to meet members of the Association and discuss the benefits they can bring, thus aiding IAML recruitment.

All told, my experience at the 2024 IAML ASW was an overwhelmingly positive one. The talks were informative, and I have already begun applying some of the lessons learned to my own workplace. However, most importantly, it was an invaluable networking opportunity. I now know who I can turn to if I encounter issues further down my career, and had the opportunity to meet the authors of some papers which have proved extremely useful during the course of my Master's degree. The level of expert knowledge provided by events such as this cannot be overstated, but even more important is the opportunity to be present in a room filled with people enthusiastic and passionate about music libraries. I will certainly be attending the 2025 ASW, if possible, and I would like to thank the MLT once more for providing me with this opportunity.